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A National University.

REPORT

MADE BY

CHARLES W. ELIOT,

PRESIDENT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY,

TO THE

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION,

(DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER INSTRUCTION,)

AUGUST 5, 1873.

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January 20, 1874.

To President Eliot, *Harvard University*.

Sir, — The attention of Congress having been directed by the President to the project of a National University at Washington, the undersigned, learning that your report on this subject to the National Educational Association is out of print, request you to permit its republication. They do so, believing that the opinions expressed in it deserve the careful consideration of Congress and the community.

Faithfully yours,

Theodore D. Woolsey, N. Haven, Ct.
B. R. Curtis, Boston.
Henry C. Lea, Philadelphia.
C. J. Stillé, Philadelphia.
Henry C. Carey, Philadelphia.
C. F. Adams, Quincy, Mass.
George William Curtis, New York.
E. L. Godkin, New York.

Harvard University, 27 Jan., 1874.

Gentlemen, — My report upon "A National University" is at your service. That it should be reprinted at your request I count an honor, and I am very glad to have the attention of legislators and the public thus drawn to it.

I am, with great respect, your obedient servant,

Charles W. Eliot.

To Rev. Dr. Woolsey, Hon. B. R. Curtis, and others.

A NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

THIS report has three parts, — first, an account of what this association has done about a national university since 1869, (pp. 3–8); secondly, an examination of two bills on the subject, which were brought before Congress in 1872, (pp. 8–18); and, lastly, a discussion of the true policy of our government upon this matter, (pp. 18–23.)

At the conclusion of an address on "The Progress of University Education," delivered by Dr. John W. Hoyt, of Wisconsin, before the National Teachers' Association at Trenton, New Jersey, on the 20th of August, 1869, the following resolution was unanimously adopted: —

"*Resolved*, That, in the opinion of this association, a great American university is a leading want of American education, and that, in order to contribute to the early establishment of such an institution, the president of this association, acting in concert with the president of the National Superintendents' Association, is hereby requested to appoint a committee consisting of one member from each of the States, and of which Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Wisconsin, shall be chairman, to take the whole matter into consideration, and to make such report thereon, at the next annual convention of said association, as shall seem to be demanded by the interests of the country."

This committee was duly appointed, but did nothing whatever during the year 1869–70. Nevertheless the chairman, acting in the name of the committee, presented at the Cleveland meeting, in August, 1870, what was called "a preliminary report," and asked that the committee might have more time. This preliminary report describes, in elevated language, the "leading offices of a true university," compares our existing

institutions with European universities, paints a glowing picture of the future of the United States, sets forth with enthusiasm what a great university would do for the country, avoids all embarrassing details, leaves the precise character of the institution, its location, its constitution and mode of government, quite undefined, and assumes only this, — that there should be one great central institution, and that for the founding and endowing thereof the private citizen, the State, and the general government must unite. It passed by all matters likely to suggest objections, and called for no specific action whatever on the part of the association: the chairman alone was responsible for it, and it bore only his signature. Of course the report was accepted, and the request for more time was granted.

At the St. Louis meeting of the National Educational Association, in August, 1871, Dr. Hoyt and a minority of the committee appointed in 1869 presented a second report. This report again avoids all details of what the proposed institution should be, and where it should be, but says in general terms that it should be comprehensive, high, free, rich, untrammelled by considerations of section, party, or creed, and so co-ordinated with the other institutions of the country as in no way to conflict with them. Further, this second report defines in some measure what the preliminary report vaguely spoke of as the necessary co-operation of the citizen, the State, and the general government. It appears in the second report that "the original endowment . . . will need to be furnished by the government, and Congress must therefore determine the general terms and conditions upon which the institution shall be administered;" that "proper authorities in the several States may have a voice in its management," and "that individual citizens and associations of citizens should be cordially invited to endow such departments . . . as shall most enlist their sympathies." The report then presents some arguments in favor of the right of Congress to endow a university, and says that the idea of a national university "is in perfect harmony with the policy and practice of the government," and that "it remains but to determine the means best calculated

to secure the adoption of the most judicious plan for the institution, and to insure the congressional and other aid necessary to the full success of the enterprise." Thereupon the committee recommend that "there be raised a new and permanent committee of less numbers than the present — say fifteen — . . . to be known as the national university committee," "that a quite limited number of members thereof should be a quorum for the transaction of business at any regularly called meeting, and that a majority shall have power to supply . . . vacancies . . ." The concluding sentence of the report is as follows: "A committee of this character would be able, in the first place, to concentrate the best thought of the country upon the various important questions involved in the perfection of a plan for the institution; and, secondly, to marshal the strength of the country in systematic and effective support of the measure, when at last formally brought to the attention of Congress." This report was signed by a little less than half of the members of the original committee. The report was accepted, and the proposed permanent committee of fifteen was appointed. I do not find that the number of members of this committee which should constitute a quorum was fixed by the association. By taking this action at the St. Louis meeting, the association showed that it entertained the idea of a single dominant university for the country, and contemplated, without disapprobation, the establishment thereof by the general government: and, through its committee, the association undertook, — first, to prepare a plan for such an institution; and, secondly, to urge the plan, when prepared, upon Congress.

The permanent committee appointed in August, 1871, under these circumstances, had serious work to do, and grave responsibilities to bear. What has it done? The members were all very busy men, and they were scattered over the country, from Massachusetts to Oregon, and from Minnesota to Louisiana. Several of them were appointed without their knowledge and consent. The natural consequence has followed: there has never been a meeting of the committee competent to transact business. Nine of the gentlemen whose

names were announced at St. Louis as members of this committee have informed me that they never attended a meeting of the committee; two more members never attended any meeting, except a brief one in a hotel parlor at St. Louis shortly after the committee was named, — a meeting which could not possibly have been competent to transact business. Of the other four members, one is the chairman, two have been long absent from home and inaccessible to my inquiries, and one has not answered my letters. It is obvious that, as a body authorized to speak and act in the name of the National Educational Association, this committee has never had a moment's existence. I congratulate the association that it is thus far free from all responsibility for whatever may have been done since August, 1871, about a national university. The permanent committee which the association then constituted upon this subject was never organized, and no one has had any authority to speak in its name or in the name of the association.

Notwithstanding this state of things, some not unimportant action was taken in the spring of 1872, looking to the establishment of a national university by Congress. Two bills to establish a national university were brought into the Senate; one of which was drawn by Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Wisconsin, the chairman of the committee appointed at St. Louis, and was presented at his request by Senator Sawyer, of South Carolina. Of this bill, so well informed a person as General Eaton, Commissioner of Education, himself a member of the St. Louis committee, says, in a letter to me, "It is the one, as I understand the facts, which was favored by the committee appointed by the National Education Association, of which Dr. J. W. Hoyt, of Madison, Wis., is chairman." There is no doubt that this was the common impression among persons who knew any thing about the presentation of the bill brought in by Senator Sawyer on the 20th of May, 1872. It behooves the association to understand how this impression was produced, and what grounds there were for such an opinion. Dr. Hoyt has been for the past four years chairman of a committee on a national university, appointed by the Na-

tional Educational Association; and the action of the association in 1871 made him chairman of a permanent committee, although the committee has never met. In that capacity he wrote letters, in the winter of 1871–72, to a large number of persons interested in education, asking their opinions and advice about a national university, and enclosing a draft of a bill to establish such an institution. These letters undoubtedly got more attention from the persons addressed, because, in many cases at least, they were written on the paper of the Bureau of Education at Washington, and were sent out from that office with envelopes for the free transmission of the replies back to the bureau. Dr. Hoyt has also talked, in the course of the last four years, with a considerable number of persons professionally concerned with education upon the subject of a national university, and has received from them a mass of suggestions and opinions in great variety. Among the persons so consulted by him, either orally or in writing, were most of the members of the committee named at St. Louis. Three or four of the committee felt a real interest in the subject, and devoted some attention to it; but they never had the advantage of common consultation, and all their suggestions were filtered through the mind of the chairman. The bill brought into the Senate by Senator Sawyer was therefore the work of a private citizen, having a certain indorsement from this association, who consulted such persons as he thought best to consult, and took as much of their advice as he liked. It was in no proper sense the work of this association, or of any committee thereof. The impression that it was favored by a committee of this association has only this warrant, that parts of it commended themselves to certain gentlemen who were named in 1871 on a committee which was never organized, and who therefore had only their individual opinions to express. I have been thus particular in describing what has taken place in regard to the project for a national university which was started in this association in 1869, because, as I examined the matter, I thought that, partly through easy good-nature, and partly through that haste in the transaction of business which is almost unavoidable in

such a large assemblage as this, coming together for two or three days once a year, the association had run a serious risk of being placed in a false position before the public upon a subject of much importance to American education. It has seemed to me that the association would do well to be cautious about constituting permanent committees, and about passing general declaratory resolutions, particularly if the resolutions convey a recommendation to some superior power, as to Congress, a State legislature, or the public at large.

I now pass to the second part of my subject, — an examination of the two bills to establish a national university, which were presented in the Senate in the spring of 1872. These two bills are tentative plans for creating a crowning university, richer, better, and more comprehensive than any existing institution, and under the patronage of the general government. They are the work of private individuals only, and nothing has thus far come of them; but they are before the country as having been read twice and referred to the Committee on Education and Labor in the Senate of the United States. In the bill presented by Senator Howe, of Wisconsin, March 25, 1872, the different faculties of the proposed university are all specified to the number of ten, and the professorships in each faculty are designated in detail, except in the faculties of military science and naval science. The same authority which establishes a faculty or a professorship can, of course, abolish either at any moment, and so get rid of unpopular incumbents. The president of the university is to be appointed by the President of the United States, with the consent of the Senate. The heads of the ten faculties are to be appointed by the president of the university, with the consent of the Senate of the United States. The president and the heads of faculties constitute an executive senate of the university. Professors are to be appointed, and may be removed, by this university senate, and private teachers are to be licensed by the same body. The president is to have the same salary as the Chief-Justice of the United States, and the heads of faculties are to have the salary of a judge of a District Court

of the United States. These places are desirable so far as pay, patronage, and conspicuousness go; they would be desired by a great number of incompetent people; the more so because these eleven officers would never be brought, like a professor, to any public test of their capacity. There is no reason whatever to suppose that the appointments would be made on any better method than that which now prevails in United States custom-houses and post-offices. We are disgracefully habituated to custom-house "rings" and post-office "rings;" last winter the newspapers talked much of an agricultural college "ring." The spectacle of a national university "ring" would be even less edifying. There is, indeed, in the bill a futile attempt to make the tenure of office of the president of the university the same as that of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States. The Supreme Court, however, was not established by Congress, but by the Constitution, and the judges of that court are consequently out of the reach of Congress: the president of a university established by act of Congress would not be. The bill gives no security whatever that all the appointments in the university would not be of the nature of political appointments. This is a fatal defect in any congressional bill to establish a university, so long as the principles of appointment to United States offices and the tenure of those offices remain what they now are. The only tenure of office which is fit for a teacher is the tenure during good behavior and competency; and this is the only tenure which will secure the services of competent professors in colleges and universities. The frequency of the elections of teachers is a very bad feature in our public school system. Permanence of tenure is necessary to make the position of a teacher one of dignity and independence. Young men of vigor and capacity will not enter a profession which offers no money prizes, unless they are induced by its stability and peacefulness, and by the social consideration which attaches to it. The system which prevails in most of our large cities and towns, of electing the teachers in the public schools at least as often as once a year, is inconsistent with this dignity, peacefulness and consideration, unless a firmly estab-

lished custom of re-electing incumbents converts the constantly recurring elections into mere formalities. We must all bitterly deplore the mortifying fact that, for more than a generation, neither dignity, peacefulness, nor social consideration has attached to any appointment in the civil service of the United States. The man appointed has sometimes adorned his office, but the office has never adorned the man. Until the service of the United States becomes, through a complete reform, at least as respectable and secure as the service of a bank, an insurance company, a manufacturing corporation, or a railroad company, not to speak of college and academy corporations, Congress cannot establish a university which will command the respect of educated Americans or win the confidence of the country, unless the appointing power for the university is made absolutely independent of all political influence. So far from doing this, the bill before us provides no effectual barrier whatever against political appointments. In several sections of the bill, there is a provision that, for certain appointments, certain specified classes of persons shall "receive the preference," — a provision of no binding or effective force whatever. There is only one really efficient provision of this character in the bill presented by Senator Howe, and that one might reasonably give serious concern to persons who live in the territories, forts, arsenals, navy yards, and light-houses of the United States. It is provided in section sixteen, that, after the year 1880, graduates of the national university in medicine and surgery "shall alone be entitled to practice medicine and surgery in any territory over which the United States shall have exclusive jurisdiction."

I shall barely mention some of the minor faults of Senator Howe's bill. To an experienced college official, the following description of the qualifications for admission to the university seems absurdly vague: "a good moral character, and such intellectual attainments as are indicated by graduation at the colleges, universities, and best class of high schools, as established by law in the several States of the United States." With the author of this bill, the four years of study which generally come between graduation at a high school and grad-

uation at a college count for nothing at all. Universities and high schools are spoken of as equivalent institutions. There may be States in this Union in which this classification is essentially correct; but there certainly are not a few States in which it is conspicuously inexact.

The bill provides that professors shall receive salaries varying from $1,000 to $2,500 a year, and that each professor may also exact a fee of ten dollars a year from each student attending his course. Under this system, the professors of popular subjects might thrive; but I fear that the professors of Oriental philosophy, scholasticism, Sclavonic languages, the Coptic language, ecclesiastical law, and similar rather remote subjects, would starve. Neither students nor teachers in this country like the fee system; it has worked well in Germany, but has never been domesticated here, except in medical schools, where it has done a great deal of harm. It creates a disagreeable money relation between teacher and student, and introduces into a faculty illiberal contentions. By section eighteen of this comprehensive bill, the military academy is removed from West Point, and so changed as to be practically abolished. This measure seems rather too grave to be brought in as an incidental part of a bill to establish a national university.

The seventeenth section, relating to the faculty of agriculture, gives countenance to delusions which have already done much mischief in the United States, and still bid fair to cause further waste of public and private resources. The first of these delusions is the model farm. The model farm, like the model machine-shop, is almost universally a model of nothing but misapplied labor, misdirected experimentation, and unprofitable investment. It can be useful to the young agriculturist only as a warning; it can teach him how to spend money, but not how to make money on a farm. The other mischievous delusion to which I wish to call attention is that the labor of a young man upon a farm for four hours a day is in any sense compensation for his board, lodging, clothing, and tuition. All such arrangements are charities injudiciously disguised from the recipients. It is this disguise which makes the general method so well fitted to breed shirks. There

lurks in all devices of this sort the notion that study and thinking are not physical exertions; so that, after prolonged study, a man may be just as fit for physical labor as if he had not worked with his brains. This is a profound mistake, which has real danger for conscientious and ambitious youth; such young persons may easily be betrayed by this false opinion into disastrous over-exertion. What is called mental labor is really the most exhausting, continuous, physical exertion which men can make, although the sense of fatigue from an excess of what is called brain-work is generally not so irresistible at the moment as the fatigue caused by too much hammering, hoeing, or walking. Section twenty-one of this bill provides "that the seat of the university shall be at the capital of the United States." I reserve this point for discussion in connection with the other bill, to which I now invite your attention.

The important feature in the bill presented in the Senate by Senator Sawyer, on the 20th of May, 1872, is the mode in which its author endeavored to provide a government for the university which would have some chance of being free from political influences; or, in other words, to deprive the government of the United States of all power over the university from the moment of its establishment, — except, of course, the power to abolish it. By this bill, the government of the university is vested in a board of regents, numbering fifty-five persons; a council of education, numbering seventeen persons; a council of faculties, which includes all the executive officers of the university and all professors; and a general council of the university, "composed of all members of the board of regents, council of education, council of faculties, and all graduates of the university of five years' standing." The last-named body, which, in the course of years, would become very numerous, has only power to make recommendations to the other boards. The duties of the council of faculties are not prescribed with distinctness. The real governing bodies are the board of regents and the council of education. It is provided "that the board of regents shall consist of one member from each State of the

United States, to be appointed by the governor thereof, with the advice and consent of the chief justice and the superintendent of public instruction, or other like officer of his State; five members from the country at large, to be appointed by the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Chief Justice, commissioner of education, and chief officer of the university, and the following members *ex officio;* to wit, the Chief Justice of the United States, commissioner of education, commissioner of agriculture, commissioner of patents, superintendent of the coast survey, superintendent of the naval observatory, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, president of the National Academy of Sciences, president of the National Educational Association, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, president of the American Philological Association, president of the American Social Science Association, and the chief officer of the university; fifteen to be a quorum." The members representing States are to serve six years, and the members at large ten years. The specified duties of the regents are "to enact laws for the government of the university, to elect the officers thereof, to determine the general conditions of admission to the university, and to confer appropriate degrees." It is expressly declared that "no faculty shall be organized, no chair created, no salary determined, and no professor appointed or removed without the approval of the board of regents." With so large an organization to direct, and such important powers to exercise, the board of regents would need to have several meetings a year. Two meetings a year would obviously be the least possible number. The cumbrousness and the costliness of so large a board, with its members scattered all over the country, need not be enlarged upon.

It is obvious that the author of the bill did not expect the members of the board of regents to attend its meetings with much constancy, for he named a quorum which is only one more than a quarter of the number of members. To name a small quorum for a large body of trustees, regents, or directors, is to countenance that neglect of their duty on the part

of the supposed managers of public and private institutions of trust, charity, or education, which has been so frequently and so grievously illustrated during the past few years.

The principle upon which the board is chiefly made up is a very questionable one. Why should there be one member from each State in the governing board of a university about which there is to be nothing sectional, sectarian, or partisan? Such a principle of local representation implies that Maine and Oregon, Minnesota and Florida, may have different interests in the institution. The different States of the Union may easily have different interests about customs, internal taxes, banking, railroads, canals, commerce, and mail routes; so that our legislative bodies are naturally formed on the principle of local representation; but there is no reason for a similar constitution of the government of a university. Philology, history, philosophy, science, and mathematics, are the same in Massachusetts and California. The professorships might as well be divided among the different States, as the places in the board of regents. Indeed, if this vicious principle were admitted in the constitution of the chief governing board, we should fully expect to see the university offices parcelled out among the different States, just as political appointments now are.

There are twelve *ex-officio* members of the board of regents, none of whom, in all probability, could give the smallest attention to this function of governing a university. Take, for instance, the Chief Justice of the United States, the commissioner of education, the superintendent of the coast survey, and the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; each of these officials is fully occupied with the regular work of his own proper office. It is an imposition upon these gentlemen to make them devote time and thought to a matter so utterly distinct from their official employment as the management of a university; and, if they are not to give time and thought to the university, the public are imposed upon by the list of *ex-officio* members of the board of regents. I know no surer way to procure an inefficient body of trustees than to constitute it in good part of officials, who will probably have but a slender

interest in the matter of the trust, and whose regular duties leave them little time and strength for extraneous functions involving labor and responsibility.

The author of the bill doubtless perceived that the board of regents would be an unwieldy and incompetent body; he therefore contrived a sort of executive committee, called the council of education. This council consists of six regents, six members of the council of faculties, and five *ex-officio* members; to wit, the chief officer of the university, commissioner of education, superintendent of the coast survey, superintendent of the naval observatory, and secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. Of this body of seventeen members, ten is a quorum. This is the working body. It is charged, in the language of the bill, "with the organization of faculties, the appointment and removal of professors and teachers, and, in general, with the educational management of the university;" but it subsequently appears that in all these things the approval of the board of regents is essential. The council of education is the board which would attend to details and prepare the business of the board of regents. It would have to meet very frequently, and, as the presence of its *ex-officio* members would ordinarily be out of the question, three out of the six regents from as many different States would have to be called in to make a quorum. The resident officers and professors of the university would supply the other seven members. A board thus constituted is an untried experiment; its working would be a curious problem. The majority of its active members would be professors, who would be called upon to advise the regents about all questions of appointment, pay, rank, and promotion, concerning their colleagues and themselves. The object which the author of this bill had in view in devising this elaborate arrangement of governing boards for his university, was a laudable one, — namely, to detach the national university from the national government; but his scheme is too novel, complicated, and unpromising to command the confidence of persons experienced in conducting educational institutions.

In singular contrast with the general tenor of this bill, the fifteenth section gives Senators and Representatives a right to nominate candidates from their respective States or districts for scholarships which secure free tuition for five years, thereby copying the worst feature in the organization of the military academy at West Point and the naval academy at Annapolis, and giving members of Congress another excuse for neglecting their proper legislative functions to busy themselves with patronage. This very objectionable section of the bill was probably intended as a bid for the votes of the members of Congress; but it is a very small bid, for the thirteenth section provides "that instruction shall at all times be as nearly free for students as is consistent with the income of the university and the best interests of learning." This is a sounding phrase, capable, like not a few other phrases in this bill, of widely differing constructions; but it strongly suggests free tuition. Free tuition, in a place of professional or other high education, is always objectionable, because it is a perfectly indiscriminate charity; when this indiscriminate charity is to be supported by national taxation, it is doubly objectionable.

The fourteenth section of the bill contains the singular provision that "no person shall be admitted for purposes of regular study and graduation who has not previously received the degree of bachelor of arts, or a degree of equal value, from some institution recognized by the university authorities." Young Americans do not get the degree of bachelor of arts, on the average, before their twenty-second year. On these terms, the regular students of the new university would, in my judgment, be few, except in the professional departments. This provision cannot be a serious one; it was probably intended to quiet the apprehensions of the three hundred institutions which now give the degree of bachelor of arts; and, of course, it can be repealed at any time.

Both the bills under discussion rely upon congressional grants or appropriations for the maintenance of the university. Senator Howe's bill does not undertake to define the amount of the appropriations required. Senator Sawyer's bill grants twenty millions of dollars, in the singular form of

an unnegotiable certificate of indebtedness of the United States, bearing interest at five per cent a year. One million of dollars a year is not a large estimate of the annual cost of the proposed university, considering the extreme wastefulness which characterizes most government expenditures. The private incorporated colleges and universities use their scanty resources with the greatest possible thrift. Their example is a wholesome one. I fear that the example of a university which had one hand in the national treasury would not be as salutary.

Both the bills plant the proposed university at Washington, a city which is the capital of the United States only in the governmental or political sense. This country has no London, no Paris, no Berlin, no Vienna, no Rome. We are fortunate that there is no single city in which all the activities of the nation, commercial, industrial, intellectual, and governmental, centre. On the Atlantic coast are four large cities, each with a character and influence of its own; in the northwest is Chicago; on the Ohio is Cincinnati; on the Mississippi is St. Louis; on the Pacific, San Francisco. Every one of these local centres is vastly more important to the country than Washington; for Washington is a focus of neither foreign commerce nor domestic trade, neither manufactures, agriculture, nor mining, neither literature nor art. The climate of the city is not very healthy, and the presence of Congress, and of the hangers-on of Congress, does not make the city a better place of residence for young men at the forming period of life. There is no precedent in Europe for a single, dominant, national university endowed by government, and the only one so endowed, and situated at a national capital. London is, in every possible sense, the capital of Great Britain; but the chief universities of Great Britain are not in London. Berlin is the seat of a Prussian university, subsidized by the state; but Prussia subsidizes several other universities as well. The university of Paris is only the largest branch of that single organization of public instruction which spreads all over France, is maintained by the government, and presided over, like the army and the

navy, by a minister. In continental Europe all universities are subsidized by government. Such is the custom of those countries, — a custom which is certainly not the outgrowth of free institutions. The leading university is now at Leyden, now at Paris, now at Bologna, now at Vienna, now at Heidelberg, now at Berlin, and now at Leipzig; the stream of students flowing fitfully from one place to another. The proposed university at Washington would bear no resemblance whatever to any of these famous seats of learning, either in its constitution or its surroundings.

And now let me recall to your minds for a moment the second duty which was assigned to the committee appointed in St. Louis in 1871. They were in the first place to prepare a plan for a national university, and in the second place they were "to marshal the strength of the country in systematic and effective support of the measure." What has really taken place? In introducing the first bill we have discussed, Senator Howe said, apologetically, "I ought to say by way of explanation that this bill was not sent to me. It was drawn by some one, I do not know who, and sent to my colleague, and it is at his request that I present it." In presenting the bill which was supposed to have the sanction of this association, Senator Sawyer said, "I wish to say in reference to this bill that I introduced it by request. . . . I do not wish to be understood as recommending it." Neither bill was supported by anybody in any way, and neither bill has been heard of since it was brought into Congress until this day. The Senators who introduced them did not imagine for a moment that any legislation would grow out of them. As to the strength of the country being marshalled in effective support of either of these measures, the idea is comical. The whole proceeding is loose, crude, hasty, undignified, and unworthy of the subject.

I turn next to my third topic, — the true policy of our government as regards university instruction. In almost all the writings about a national university, and of course in the two Senate bills now under discussion, there will be found the im-

plication, if not the express assertion, that it is somehow the duty of our government to maintain a magnificent university. This assumption is the foundation upon which rest the ambitious projects before us, and many similar schemes. Let me try to demonstrate that the foundation is itself unsound.

The general notion that a beneficent government should provide and control an elaborate organization for teaching, just as it maintains an army, a navy, or a post-office, is of European origin, being a legitimate corollary to the theory of government by Divine right. It is said that the state is a person having a conscience and a moral responsibility; that the government is the visible representative of a people's civilization, and the guardian of its honor and its morals, and should be the embodiment of all that is high and good in the people's character and aspirations. This moral person, this corporate representative of a Christian nation, has high duties and functions commensurate with its great powers, and none more imperative than that of diffusing knowledge and advancing science.

I desire to state this argument for the conduct of high educational institutions by government, as a matter of abstract duty, with all the force which belongs to it; for under an endless variety of thin disguises, and with all sorts of amplifications and dilutions, it is a staple commodity with writers upon the relation of government to education. The conception of government upon which this argument is based is obsolescent everywhere. In a free community the government does not hold this parental, or patriarchal, — I should better say Godlike, — position. Our government is a group of servants appointed to do certain difficult and important work. It is not the guardian of the nation's morals; it does not necessarily represent the best virtue of the republic, and is not responsible for the national character, being itself one of the products of that character. The doctrine of state personality and conscience, and the whole argument to the dignity and moral elevation of a Christian nation's government as the basis of government duties, are natural enough under Grace-of-God governments, but they find no ground of practical application to modern republican confederations; they have no

bearing on governments considered as purely human agencies, with defined powers and limited responsibilities. Moreover, for most Americans, these arguments prove a great deal too much; for if they have the least tendency to persuade us that government should direct any part of secular education, with how much greater force do they apply to the conduct by government of the religious education of the people! These propositions are indeed the main arguments for an established church. Religion is the supreme human interest, government is the supreme human organization; therefore government ought to take care for religion, and a Christian government should maintain distinctively Christian religious institutions. This is not theory alone; it is the practice of all Christendom, except in America and Switzerland. Now we do not admit it to be our duty to establish a national church. We believe not only that our people are more religious than many nations which have established churches, but also that they are far more religious under their own voluntary system than they would be under any government establishment of religion. We do not admit for a moment that establishment or no establishment is synonymous with national piety or impiety. Now, if a beneficent Christian government may rightly leave the people to provide themselves with religious institutions, surely it may leave them to provide suitable universities for the education of their youth. And here again the question of national university or no national university is by no means synonymous with the question, Shall the country have good university education or not? The only question is, Shall we have a university supported and controlled by government, or shall we continue to rely upon universities supported and controlled by other agencies?

There is then no foundation whatever for the assumption that it is the duty of our government to establish a national university. I venture to state one broad reason why our government should not establish and maintain a university. If the people of the United States have any special destiny, any peculiar function in the world, it is to try to work out, under extraordinarily favorable circumstances, the problem of free

institutions for a heterogeneous, rich, multitudinous population, spread over a vast territory. We indeed want to breed scholars, artists, poets, historians, novelists, engineers, physicians, jurists, theologians, and orators; but, first of all, we want to breed a race of independent, self-reliant freemen, capable of helping, guiding, and governing themselves. Now the habit of being helped by the government, even if it be to things good in themselves, — to churches, universities, and railroads, — is a most insidious and irresistible enemy of republicanism; for the very essence of republicanism is self-reliance. With the continental nations of Europe, it is an axiom that the government is to do every thing, and is responsible for every thing. The French have no word for "public spirit," for the reason that the sentiment is unknown to them. This abject dependence on the government is an accursed inheritance from the days of the divine right of kings. Americans, on the contrary, maintain precisely the opposite theory, namely, that government is to do nothing not expressly assigned it to do, that it is to perform no function which any private agency can perform as well, and that it is not to do a public good even, unless that good be otherwise unattainable. It is hardly too much to say that this doctrine is the foundation of our public liberty. So long as the people are really free, they will maintain it in theory and in practice. During the war of the Rebellion we got accustomed to seeing the government spend vast sums of money and put forth vast efforts; and we asked ourselves — why should not some of these great resources and powers be applied to works of peace, to creation as well as to destruction? So we subsidized railroads, and steamship companies, and agricultural colleges, and now it is proposed to subsidize a university. The fatal objection to this subsidizing process is that it saps the foundations of public liberty. The only adequate securities of public liberty are the national habits, traditions, and character acquired and accumulated in the practice of liberty and self-control. Interrupt these traditions, break up these habits, or cultivate the opposite ones, or poison that national character, and public liberty will suddenly be found defenceless. We deceive our-

selves dangerously when we think or say that education, whether primary or university, can guarantee republican institutions. Education can do no such thing. A republican people should indeed be educated and intelligent; but it by no means follows that an educated and intelligent people will be republican. Do I seem to conjure up imaginary evils to follow from this beneficent establishment of a superb national university? We teachers should be the last people to forget the sound advice, — *obsta principiis.* A drop of water will put out a spark which otherwise would have kindled a conflagration that rivers could not quench.

Let us cling fast to the genuine American method — the old Massachusetts method — in the matter of public instruction. The essential features of that system are local taxes for universal elementary education, voted by the citizens themselves; local elective boards to spend the money raised by taxation and control the schools; and, for the higher grades of instruction, permanent endowments administered by incorporated bodies of trustees. This is the American voluntary system, in sharp contrast with the military, despotic organization of public instruction which prevails in Prussia and most other states of continental Europe. Both systems have peculiar advantages, the crowning advantage of the American method being that it breeds freemen. Our ancestors well understood the principle that to make a people free and self-reliant, it is necessary to let them take care of themselves, even if they do not take quite as good care of themselves as some superior power might.

And now, finally, let us ask what should make a university at the capital of the United States, established and supported by the general government, more national than any other American university. It might be larger and richer than any other, and it might not be; but certainly it could not have a monopoly of patriotism, or of catholicity, or of literary or scientific enthusiasm. There is an attractive comprehensiveness, and a suggestion of public spirit and love of country, in the term "national;" but, after all, the adjective only narrows and belittles the noble conception contained in the word

"university." Letters, science, art, philosophy, medicine, law, and theology are larger and more enduring than nations. There is something childish in this uneasy hankering for a big university in America, as there is also in that impatient longing for a distinctive American literature which we so often hear expressed. As American life grows more various and richer in sentiment, passion, thought, and accumulated experience, American literature will become richer and more abounding; and, in that better day, let us hope that there will be found several universities in America, though by no means one in each State, as free, liberal, rich, national, and glorious as the warmest advocate of a single, crowning university at the national capital could imagine his desired institution to become.

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